

Opening Statement
before the Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space

The Science and Ethics of Human Cloning
(January 29, 2003)
by
Senator Sam Brownback

Thank you all for coming to the hearing today.

Today we will investigate the science and the ethics of human cloning.

The world was stunned when a cult claimed to have produced the first live-born human clone.

Whether or not the Raelian claim of a live-born human clone is, in the end, proven to be true or false; we all know, at a minimum, that a live-born human clone is either already among us or is, at least, a likely reality.

Of course, what the Raelians claim to have done, is built on work that some in the biotech community are attempting to do. Work has already begun in biotech labs for the mass production of made to order human clones.

Some want to begin cloning humans; they just don't want anyone to call it that.

Some who support human cloning would have society believe that there are two different types of cloning: so-called, reproductive and so-called, therapeutic.

Science, however, tells us that there is only one type of cloning and, when successful, always results in the creation of a young human. Initially a human embryo, eventually a live birth.

All cloning is reproductive. By that I mean all human cloning produces another human life.

So-called therapeutic cloning is the process by which an embryo is specially created for the directly intended purpose of subsequently killing it for its parts or for research purposes. Some proponents of human cloning claim that an embryo created in this manner will have cells that are a genetic match to the patient being cloned, and thus would not be rejected by the patient's immune system. This claim is overstated at best; in fact there are some scientific reports that show the presence of mitochondrial DNA in the donor egg can trigger an immune-response rejection in the patient being treated.

To describe the process of destructive human cloning as therapeutic, when the intent is to create a new human life that is destined for its virtual immediate destruction, is misleading. However one would like to describe the process of destructive cloning – it is certainly not therapeutic for the clone who has been created and then disemboweled for the purported benefit of its adult

twin.

I, along with the President and the vast majority of Americans, do not believe that we should create human life just to destroy it— yet that is exactly what is being proposed by those who support cloning in some circumstances. And however they might name the procedure – whether they call it nuclear transplantation, therapeutic cloning, therapeutic cellular transfer, DNA regenerative therapy of some other euphemism – it is simply, human cloning.

Let's be clear, the Raelians and those interested in human cloning research seek to create human life through a process of human cloning that a vast majority of Americans clearly oppose. The threat presented to us by the Raelians is one that should re-focus our attention on the immediacy of passing a permanent and comprehensive ban on all human cloning.

The need for a permanent and comprehensive ban is pressing.

Six states have already passed laws that outlaw human cloning and several more are beginning to follow suit. In fact, just yesterday the Indiana State Senate voted 47 - 3 to ban all human cloning.

Clearly the Congress must address this issue during the 108th Congress. Later today, Senator Mary Landrieu and I, along with several of our Senate colleagues will introduce the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2003.

The President has already stated his unequivocal support for a permanent and comprehensive ban on all human cloning numerous times, including in his annual State of the Union address last night; and during the 107th Congress the House voted in an overwhelming bipartisan majority to ban it.

The time for action in the Senate is now. Hopefully, with this hearing, and with some of the hearings to come over the next several months we will be able to better understand the implications of human cloning for our society.